

Farm Bill Assistance and CREP Outreach Program Policy

From the Board of Water and Soil Resources, State of Minnesota

Version: 2022

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Approval: Board Order #22-28

Policy Statement

The Farm Bill Assistance and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach programs were established to accelerate and provide assistance to landowners participating in United States Department of Agriculture Farm Bill and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and State of Minnesota programs in order to benefit water quality (nutrient and sediment load reductions) and wildlife habitat.

The policy applies to all Farm Bill Assistance and CREP Outreach and Implementation Program grants.

Reason for the policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear expectations for the implementation of grants delivered through these programs. More specific requirements or criteria may be included in program guidance when specified by statute, rule, funding source, or appropriation language.

Grantees are responsible for the administration and decisions concerning the local use of these funds in accordance with applicable Minnesota Statutes, BWSR policies, and other applicable laws. BWSR will use grant agreements as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with applicable laws and program policies.

The BWSR Grants Administration Manual provides the primary framework for local management of these funds.

Farm Bill Assistance Program

1. Eligible Activities

The primary purpose of activities funded through these programs is to provide increased local capacity to assist landowners in participating in water quality and wildlife protection activities. Eligible activities include the following categories:

- 1.1. **Technical Assistance.** The primary purpose of the Farm Bill Assistance program is to provide technical services to landowners in accordance with the approved grant work plan. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to: marketing and outreach to landowners, assistance with contracts and forms to enroll acres in the appropriate Federal or State program, costs of Farm Bill Assistance staff to attend training, and other technical activities specifically identified in the grant work plan.
 - 1.1.1. CREP Outreach and Implementation Program grants can only be used for CREP and related program technical assistance and not for other Federal or State programs.
- 1.2. **Grant Management and Reporting.** Grant funds may be used for local grant management and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing the program.
- 1.3. **Equipment and Supplies.** Eligible expenses include necessary equipment, hardware, software, and supplies necessary for producing the outcomes described in the grant agreement and associated work plan, and occur during the grant period.

2. Grant Match Requirements

A minimum 10% match is required from non-state funds. The anticipated source(s) for this match shall be identified in the grant work plan.

3. Grant Work Plan and Reporting Requirements

To ensure the continued success of the program, development of grant work plans, regular reporting of expenditures, and technical assistance and accomplishments are required.

- 3.1. **Grant Work Plan.** Work plans shall be developed in eLINK and must be approved before work can begin on this grant. Work plans shall reflect each eligible activity, a description of the anticipated activity accomplishments, and grant and match funding amounts to accomplish each of the activities.
- 3.2. **Grant Reporting.** Descriptions of actual results and financial expenditures for each work plan activity must be reported in eLINK by February 1 of each year. Unless otherwise specified, billing rates used for reporting and reimbursement requests may include the employee's base hourly rate plus the costs of benefits, leave, facilities, and administration.

3.3. **Program Reporting.** Additional accomplishment reporting for all projects and assistance provided by the assigned staff for the calendar year, regardless of grant fund used to fund the project or assistance, is also required. The procedures and templates for accomplishments reporting will be provided by BWSR.

3.4. **Grant Closeout.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of the conclusion of each grant agreement or expenditure of all grant funds, whichever occurs first, grantees are required to:

- a. Provide documentation of all work plan activities completed with the grant funding in eLINK; and
- b. Submit a signed eLINK Financial Report to BWSR; and
- c. Return any unspent funds.

4. BWSR Program Monitoring and Reconciliation Requirements

BWSR staff is authorized to develop grant agreements, including requirements and processes for project outcomes reporting, closeouts, financial reconciliations, and grant verifications. All grantees must follow the grant agreement and Grants Administration Manual.

In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.

History

Version	Description	Date
2018	First Farm Bill Assistance and CREP Outreach Program Policy	8/23/18
2022	This policy was updated in 2022 to comply with Board Order #22-28 and make other minor technical adjustments.	5/25/22